

NOV 17 2020

Masks to become mandatory in Prince Edward Island

Effective November 20, 2020, non-medical masks or face coverings will be mandatory in all indoor public spaces in Prince Edward Island.

Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Heather Morrison, says the change is, in large part, due to the surging COVID-19 cases across the country.

“While many Islanders are wearing masks faithfully, we can collectively do a better job of protecting ourselves and others. Much like our neighbours in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, we are relying on Islanders to do the right thing and routinely wear a mask when in public places,” said Dr. Morrison. “While not our first line of defense, masks provide an additional layer of protection. Masks supplement, and do not replace, other public health measures. Even when wearing a mask, it is important to keep a distance of six feet from people who do not live in your household.”

Masks will be mandatory in locations, including but not limited to:

- Stores and retail businesses;
- Personal services and salons;
- Restaurants (except when eating or drinking);
- Arts, sports and recreation facilities (except during exercise or when masks cannot be worn);
- Places of worship;
- Government buildings where public services are provided;
- Taxis and public transit; and
- Workplaces that are open to the public.

Exemptions to mandatory masks include, but not limited to:

- Children under the age of 2;
- Children under 5 who will not wear a mask;
- Anyone who cannot remove a mask without assistance; and
- Valid medical reasons, such as active breathing problems (most people with underlying medical conditions can wear a mask safely).

Dr. Morrison noted that for those who cannot wear a mask for medical reasons, sometimes these reasons are not visible to others. Islanders and businesses are encouraged to be trusting and kind, and show compassion and understanding in these cases.

Dr. Morrison does not recommend that individuals and families travel to or from PEI over the holidays. Family members who decide to travel to PEI over the holidays from outside the Atlantic Bubble, must apply for pre-travel approval through the Family Connections Stream and be prepared to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival. Pre-travel approval

applications should be submitted by December 1 to allow adequate time to process applications and to facilitate staffing throughout the holiday season.

Holiday gatherings should be kept small to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. While the personal gathering limit is 20 people, this number is only permitted if at least six feet of physical distancing can be maintained.

At this point, there is no evidence of community spread of COVID-19 in Prince Edward Island and the risk of transmission in the province remains low. Prince Edward Island has had a total of 68 positive cases of COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic. All cases to date have been travel-related. Information about the province's COVID-19 cases is available online.

Backgrounder:

The Chief Public Health Office continues to work closely with the federal government, provincial and territorial counterparts, government departments and Health PEI to monitor the pandemic situation and prepare for all COVID-19 related impacts to the province, including health, social and economic. The public health risk of COVID-19 is continually reassessed and Islanders will be updated as new information becomes available.

Everyone is encouraged to follow routine prevention measures:

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow or a tissue
- Stay home if you are not feeling well
- Limit touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Keep your circle of contacts small
- Wear a mask in closed, indoor public spaces
- Maintain a distance of two meters from others as much as possible
- Don't share items like drinking glasses and water bottles
- Frequently clean surfaces like taps, doorknobs and countertops

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